A WORD ON THE TREATMENT OF THE WINDOW IN ANGLO-CLASSIC DESIGN.

I NEED scarcely claim for the window an important place in our architecture. In southern countries, the door for the admission of air, the verandah and portico for protection from heat, may be the primary elements; but in England, and similar climates, the window is the grand characteristic—the most important feature. After the door, which is, of course, common to all buildings and styles, the window is the most indispensable of detached features. It occupies most space in our designs, and is therefore the feature that must ever chiefly distinguish English edifices.

The window being thus important, it is necessary to give it, in every respect, a considerable share of attention, on the design and composition of a building, that it may duly contribute to the entire result, and bear a proper part in expressing the purpose of the building. Lord Bacon includes in his idea of a princely palace, "fine coloured windows of several works;" and, indeed, no part of a house is more susceptible of decoration, or can receive it with greater advantage to the general pictorial effect.

One of the first things to consider in reference to windows is their size and number,—that is to say, the actual quantity of window opening in a given apartment, which involves the proportion of void to solid—a grave consideration. A good deal has been written and said upon this subject. Utility is first to be considered: windows are not to look at only, but to use—to enjoy; and the size and arrangement that secure the greatest amount of comfort and pleasure should be preferred. We want more window space or surface of glass in our buildings than is required in those of southern Europe, and therefore we cannot take the Italian palace or house as our model in this particular, nor be guided by the rules on this head laid down by Palladio, Scamozzi, or Vitruvius, which, as they were prescribed for the works of a different climate, can be of little service to us. Neither, on the other hand, should the whole front be an alternating of light and mullion, as in Elizabethan architecture, or we shall have the rooms too cold in winter.

These considerations are, however, to be in some measure influenced by regard to proportion; and on this subject there are laws which are applicable to all countries: of these laws great breaches have been committed, chiefly in reducing too much the solids—a fault conspicuous in many important erections in London and other places. There are laws prescribed by solidity which must never be violated. Piers between windows, it has been said, should never be less than the aperture: real architectural character requires that they be far more; but the proportion of pier to aperture must be governed by the order intended to be used, and the expression intended to be given—whether serious and grave, or lightsome and gay, or an intermediate shade. A building, I would however observe, where the size or number of the windows has reduced the solids to the appearance of mere props, may have some desirable qualities, but it will lack the dignity of classic art, and be wanting in architectural character itself. Where a large quantity of light is required, it is best obtained by grouping several windows together, that is to say, giving the needful amount of window opening in one composition of several compartments, as in the binated and Venetian arrangements—methods which afford great facility for effective decoration. The three-light window, in particular, is very susceptible of architectural and symmetrical embellishment.

General form, decoration, and disposition are the points next to be considered. Windows bear no inconsiderable part in expressing the purpose of buildings; and in their form, degree of richness, or simplicity of decoration, and their arrangement or relative positions, we have means of giving to each edifice its peculiar expression, significant of its destination.

In the general form of windows, it appears to me, we have not drawn upon nature in our Anglo-Classic Architecture to the extent that has been gone to in other styles. It must be obvious to the most cursory observer, that the curved line is not sufficiently appreciated by classic designers. The circular window, for instance—a favourite form in pointed design,—in the classics, is banished to the barn and hayloft! Surely a general composition might be designed in which elliptical and circular shaped windows might be introduced into principal apartments with good effect, both inside and out. They would, perhaps, look best on a small scale, and the composition would have to be carefully adapted to them. The expense would preclude such forms from general use, but their occasional employment would relieve us from some portion of the monotony under which the eye is now oppressed.

The semi-circle for the head is an appropriate and noble form, and the arch that covers it a fit object of decoration: finished with square dressings it is still effective, and susceptible of much beauty. For mezzanines, and upper or inferior stories, square, circular, and semi-circular windows are not objectionable, but, with tasteful dressings, are proper and elegant objects, and give effect by contrast to the adjacent tier of oblong ones. Small windows are often required for an upper story in an important building, and this necessity is generally considered a difficulty; but such windows, however small or short, may each be made as ornamental and pleasing an object as any panel could be, and more powerful. Circular and circular-headed windows, in a circular wall, however they may exercise the geometric skill of the architect and mason, are objectionable, as the overhanging of the wall must ever have a disagreeable effect. The practice of diminishing windows in width upwards should be very cautiously resorted to: a gentle diminution may sometimes, in Greek design, have a pleasing effect: a very sensible one, on the contrary, can only harmonise with the pyramidal constructions of the Egyptians.

With regard to decoration, columns and pilasters may be employed with great advantage in the embellishment of windows, when not dwarfed by similar features used in the general decoration of the building; and additional effect may be given by stone pedestals and balconies. The propriety, however, of thus employing columns and entablatures, spite of Italian authority, has been questioned by our critics; and, in truth, at first sight, the practice seems irrational, and difficult to reconcile with a true theory of the art,—with the legitimate use and object of the orders. But if the cornice can be proved to be useful, and it doubtless can, then the rest are justified in coming in as its necessary supports and attendants. Now, cornices not only have the appearance of affording protection to the window from the violence of heavy rain, as in door-ways, but they do really yield such protection, and a great deal more than at first sight appears: yet all the protection from weather consistent with non-obstruction of light, is a worthy and valuable object; and this is generally gained by cornices, or might be gained. I say *might* be, for if they were kept nearer to the upper edge of the opening than they usually are, and made of a bolder projection, they would answer this purpose better. Lessening the width of frieze for this object would be justifiable, and would be attended with no ill effect. On the contrary, its shortness calls for it: short entablatures look best of the lowest gauge. The upper tier of windows being near to the main cornice of the building, have less need of this protection, and they are therefore generally without it.

There are forms of windows, however, against which no objections of this nature could be at all conceived. Grouped windows of two, three, or more lights, admit columnar decoration with the highest propriety, and are, so adorned, susceptible of great beauty of effect. Perhaps nothing more beautiful could be conceived in the way of window form and combination, than the Venetian window of semicircular-headed centre, arrayed in full classic costume. But there are many other arrangements in which the employment of columns are not only proper, but essential. Cornices to windows which are under protection of a portico, or as sometimes seen, close under the entablature of the building, which perhaps projects something before it, are indefensible. There should be no favouritism in window decoration; but difference in degree of ornament, or protection by cornices between upper and lower tier, or between windows in the same horizontal range, should arise, or appear to arise, from difference in the quality or importance of the apartments to which they belong. A superior apartment may be considered to call for greater ornament on the exterior of the window as well as interior, and to demand also greater protection from weather, than inferior ones. Depth of recess is essential to effect in windows of whatever form or arrangement, with which might be combined the graceful effect of curvilinear reveals. Deep moulded or panelled jambs would look rich and imposing. Verandahs and porticoes merely for exterior shadow or effect, over windows through which the full light of day is desirable, are improper.

As to the arrangement or disposition of windows there is in many cases great difficulty, the laws of symmetry having generally to be observed, both within and without. In private dwellings, the requirements of convenience being numerous and imperative, the rules of symmetry admit of mitigation; but in public buildings strict symmetrical arrangement can seldom be dispensed with. In detached houses windows should be arranged according to the purposes of the apartments to which they belong, whether to be used for morning or evening, winter or summer, with some reference also to the direction of the winds, to encourage the admission of the more healthful breezes, and exclude as much as possible those of an opposite quality; also to command the finest and most extended prospects; for which purpose, projecting windows, as bows and bays, are useful, as well as agreeable, for affording a private recess in the room,—"pretty retiring places for conference,"—ends, however, imperfectly answered, unless they be judiciously placed. How often do we see, in villas, bow-windows situated one on each side of an entrance door-way, in the same vertical plane, and consequently looking directly into and neutralising each other; not only destroying entirely the interior privacy, but obstructing half the exterior view that either would otherwise have afforded.

The nearer a window-sill approaches the floor, and the more the jambs are splayed, the more cheerful a room will look: placing the sill even with the floor, seems almost essential to the elegance of a drawing-room; while the opposite treatment gives the appearance of confinement and gloom, and, carried to an extreme, that is to say, by placing a short opening or window near the ceiling of a room, suggests a significant arrangement, as regards expression, for prison design, both within and without. In bed-rooms, of course, a certain height of window sill from the floor is requisite. Window heads should not extend quite up to the ceiling: the critical eye requires a space of wall between the window dressings and the cornice of the apartment. Between the windows in the different stories of a building, there must exist a relation of proportion, as well as a uniformity horizontally; and the intervals between the different heights is also an important subject of attention. Solidity requires, not only sufficient pier between windows, but sufficient spaces between the tiers of the different stories: not only is this demanded by solidity, both real and apparent, but the eye requires it for repose: it is essential to architectural character and effect. Ample space between stories is exceedingly favourable to this end in all styles of decoration.

A great deal of bad taste has been exhibited, in some of the most important buildings, in the design and disposition of the windows, and many entire failures have originated in this cause. While some architects have neglected the windows, others have been too lavish in their decoration, which has not been bestowed with that judgment and reserve which a due study of the ancients would have inspired. At St. Peter's Church at Rome, many of the window dressings are in a most vicious style, and exceptions could be made to other celebrated buildings of the same class. A fault of our own St. Paul's is having the two stories of windows too nearly equal, manifesting thereby a want of subordination and contrast of parts. As to domestic buildings, I have witnessed evidence of a better notion of composition in some of our older brick dwelling houses, than is shown at present. In some of these a simple division into few and great parts is obtained by uniting small ones; combining, for instance, with suitable masonry and decoration, two heights of windows. I do not allude to the dishonest

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